

## **Master Gardener Only How to Host a State MG Meeting**

### **1-3 years out**

- Get consensus from MG group and County Agent and office
- Apply to State Extension MG coordinator
- You need a location that can feed 350 -600 people at one time.
- You need hotel accommodations for 200-600 people.
- Set a date with the state office
- Work with state MG office to negotiate hotel rates/ block rooms
- Negotiate conference rates, book facility
- Choose a theme and logo

**ALL CONTRACTS MUST BE SIGNED BY EXTENSION DIRECTOR. ANY DEPOSITS FOR EVENTS CAN BE MADE BY STATE MG COORDINATOR.**

### **Committees needed:**

**Overall Chair** – Coordinates all events; all committees report to this person; work closely with state office and county office and county group.

**Decorations** – Work within budget to have decorations at the events. Table decorations do not need to be changed for everything. Decide on how we are dispersing decorations at the end.

**Food** – Work with all events that need food to coordinate what is being eaten. Work with state staff to negotiate prices. When setting prices, they need to be FIXED costs - all taxes and gratuities added in. Consider vegetarian, diabetic and gluten free diets.

**Goody Bags** - The county as a whole will choose the bags, but someone needs to coordinate the items you will put in the bag. Garden related things - seeds, small packets of fertilizer, etc. are always good. Pencils, pens, notepads, sunscreen, water bottles, etc., from local businesses are good items for the bags. Make a list and divide up so everyone doesn't hit the same people.

**Hospitality** – An added touch to ensure visitors feel welcome. This can include having volunteers posted on the first day of the conference at the various host hotels as greeters. They can be VIP Guides and/or welcome speakers and other invited guests. They can coordinate a "hospitality room" for volunteers during set-up days prior to the conference by having lunch, snacks, drinks, etc.

**Newsletter** – This committee is not necessary but does help with convention publicity before and after registration goes out. In the past, monthly newsletters have started in the fall prior to the event - these are short, one or two pages with photos, etc. showcasing the event, city, etc. Copies of previous convention newsletters are available for ideas. Newsletter will need to be in MS word format so we can post on the website and so folks can open them.

**Pre – Post Conference tour** – If the county chooses to do one, someone will need to coordinate and lead the tour. Find place(s) to go, set a budget, discuss a cost for the tour, if an overnight event pick a hotel, meals (cost and where to eat), work with transportation committee and state office to secure bus, secure bathroom stops along the way (as most bus companies rather you not use their facility on board unless it is an emergency).

**Registration** – All registration is done in advance with a cut off at least 2 weeks before the event (usually longer). This is done at the state level. 2-4 weeks before the event we will bring printed nametags and all registration information. You will need to compile things and organize on-site registration. This consists of passing out nametags and schedules, giving tickets for goody bags and t-shirts. Also it will turn into an information desk. Not much needed here in advance, but very important during the event.

**Secretary** – Someone who will take minutes at each committee meeting, work with state office on specifics if needed and send minutes to committee and state office in a timely fashion. Keep a file with all meeting minutes for reference. It is also a good idea to have a "to do" list at the end or beginning of the minutes that lists who is to do what by the next meeting.

**Silent Auction** – In recent years the state County 76 advisory board has been chairing this, but local volunteers will be needed to man it during the event.

**Signage** – If you have enough volunteers, it is good to have a sign chairman. Doesn't have to be a committee - could be just one or two people. It is good for someone to see what signs are already printed (some we pass along from conference to conference for use), what signs each committee needs, gather sign orders from the committees, turn in sign order to state office WELL in advance of the conference (to allow for printing time and transportation to a planning meeting). Pass out the signs to the committees (preferably before the conference), gather signs from committees after the conference. Return the signs to the state office or pass on to the next conference at the Pass the Torch Luncheon held in the summer after the conference. Help put out signs at conference site (directional signs, parking signs, exit signs, etc.)

**Speakers** - These events are about highlighting a specific area of the state. Most of the speakers should be local or in the region. Compile a list of potential speakers and topics. Once they are chosen, contact speakers to see if they are interested in coming. Work with speakers on getting in bios, titles of talks and handouts. Coordinate who will introduce them and monitor their rooms during the conference.

**Special events** – Opening day is usually something unique to the area - tailgate party at UA; picnic in the park; botanical garden event; self-guided walking tours, etc. Someone needs to come up with an idea and organize it.

**Sponsorship** – Compile a list of potential sponsors in the county. Review who has sponsored in the past. Take the list to a county meeting and see if anyone has personal contacts. Decide what you will give for sponsorship (name on bag - what level?) Signage; participation in event. Draft a sponsorship letter and make personal contacts.

**Thank You** – Send thank you notes to sponsors, speakers, city leaders, etc., after the event. Create thank you list from all committees with name and address. Not much work for this prior to conference, main work is after the event. We can get note cards printed with the host logo for this purpose.

**Tours** – Start scoping out potential garden tours at least a year in advance. Don't make any commitments until all have been seen. You will need a minimum of 9 gardens for three separate tours. If you can find homes that are side by side or within walking distance, this helps, but it is not required. Once you have decided on the stops you want, look at a feasible grouping of them for timing. Drive the tours again and see if you have time to get it done - normally tours leave between 8 and 8:30 a.m. and return by noon. Afternoon tours leave at 1 and return by 4:30. Be sure to have a least one bathroom stop for each tour. (can be a home if the homeowner is ok with that, a church, etc.) Choose MGs who know the area to lead the tours. Do tour leader training closer to the conference, taking each docent on the tour so they know where they are going. Have a backup docent in case someone gets sick. We print labels for gardens identifying up to 100 plants in their gardens. Work with the garden owners on these. Send in the list in a digital format (no hand written lists are accepted) to the state office. Name the tours and come up with a brief description (have tour names and description ready by December – before the conference registration goes out the first of February.)

**Trade Show – Checks for vendor space should be made payable to UACES.** Once decided on when and where it will be, work on securing vendors for the trade show. Sample forms and letter are available. Set price. Make personal contact with garden related vendors. Plant and more plants are always wanted. Non-garden related items sometimes don't do well - jewelry has been hit and miss. Garden art, food items, and books usually do pretty good, but plants are number one. Set up trade show and organize volunteers to help with set up and take down. Group needs to decide if there is a plant holding area and how it will be managed.

**Transportation** – Work with all committees who need busses or some form of transportation. Get bids from bus companies. Once decided on a company work with state office to get contract signed. Once tours are decided, take bus company on a driving tour to make sure busses can make it to all locations. Work with tour committee on driving routes. Day of tours be on hand to coordinate busses. Work with getting water on all busses.

**Treasurer** – Work on form for reimbursement and deposits. Keep a record of all financial matters and work with committees on monetary needs. For reimbursement, we must have receipts. Work with state office and chairs on budget. During the event, have cash boxes as needed for any sale events. Work with state coordinator on payments. While most money goes through state ADC office, this is a good checks and balances for the event.

**Volunteer Coordinator** – One of THE most important jobs. All committees need to decide how many volunteers they need. All volunteers will fill out a form (will be provided) to give their preferences on what they do. The volunteer coordinator needs to organize and create a master list of who will be where during the event. All volunteer needs must go through this committee.

#### **NOTES:**

Any profit or loss of the event stays in the state MG account. Local county groups can take the profit from t-shirt sales and any other items they wish to sell, along with raffles if wanted. Silent Auction money is earmarked for something specific each year - this year, leadership training.

#### **Timeline:**

Most state meetings start between noon and 2 on day one. Some special event is usually done that day and evening.

First full day is usually broken up into tours and seminars. These can be done morning and afternoon, with the day repeated, or counties can choose a different approach and do tours and seminars only in the morning and/or afternoon and everyone is together for keynotes the other part.

Third day is usually over at noon. This can be done either with tours and seminars or everyone together. At some point an awards program needs to be accommodated.

Counties can choose to offer a pre or post conference tour, which will have an extra fee involved.

Typical meals that are included in registration: 2 dinners, 2 lunches, plus breaks. Receptions are optional.

Breakfast will need to be included if it is not included with rooms. Any meals we can have off-site give us more flexibility on what we serve and lowers the price.

Keep in mind that these are guidelines. Each county can make their own decisions on how they want to do things. The meetings are not always a cookie cutter approach but should reflect the flavor of the county. Budgets, sample letters and evaluations of previous meetings are also available to the hosting counties. The state coordinator will meet with your county monthly to help set this up.

Business cards can be printed up with the county logo and county contact information